

Communities Against Terrorism

Handling Suspicious Packages

What Should I Consider Suspicious?

If you receive a suspicious package or letter:

- Do not panic!
- If possible, place the item in a plastic bag or containment system and seal it
- Stay in your office or immediate work area. Make sure your coworkers do the same (evacuate to a secondary location if you suspect an explosive)
- Prevent others from entering the area
- Call 911. Be prepared to give authorities the exact location of the incident, the number of people potentially exposed, a description of the package or device, and a summary of actions taken.
- Keep hands away from your face
- If possible, without leaving your work area, wash your hands

- Wait for help to arrive

If you have already opened a suspicious package:

- Do not disturb the item any further
- If any material has spilled, do not attempt to clean it up
- Do not cover the material up
- Turn off any fans or air circulation equipment in the area



What Should I Do?

Characteristics of suspicious packages:

- Excessive postage
- Handwritten or poorly typed address
- Misspelling
- Strange or no return address
- Incorrect titles
- Not addressed to a specific person
- Postmarked from city/state that does not match return address
- Restrictive markings such as “confidential” or “personal”
- Oily stains
- Excessive tape or string

**Columbus, Ohio Division of Police
Homeland Security Section
Terrorism Early Warning Unit
614-645-5410
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Terrorism may be national or international in scope, but terrorist incidents occur locally and are preceded by a number of pre-incident activities. Individuals in the community are key to identifying these pre-incident activities. By learning what to look for, **you** can aid law enforcement officials in protecting the homeland.

Your knowledge can be an invaluable resource to the law enforcement community. In your business arena, **you** are best informed about what constitutes suspicious activity.

By being aware of what to look for and knowing how to report suspicious behavior, **you** can make a positive contribution in the fight against terrorism. The **partnership between the community and law enforcement** is essential to the success of anti-terrorism efforts.

It is important to remember that just because someone's speech, actions, beliefs, appearance, or way of life is different, it does not mean that he or she is suspicious. Instead, focus on behavior and activities that are unusual or out of place for the situation and that appear to be suspicious.

The activities outlined on this handout are by no means all-inclusive but have been compiled from a review of terrorist events over several years. Some of the activities, taken individually, could be innocent and must be examined by law enforcement professionals in a larger context to determine whether there is a basis to investigate.

This project was supported by Grant Number 2007-MU-BX-K002, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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